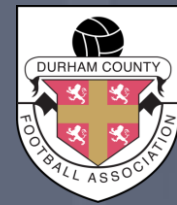


Name: Sean Dolan

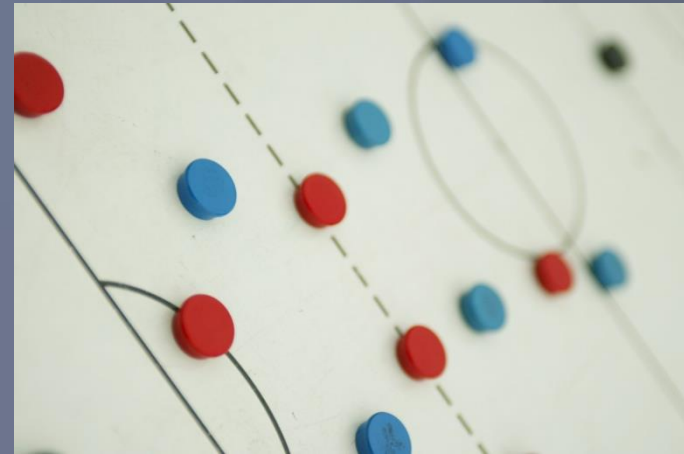
FA Level 2 in Coaching Football Learner Journey



My coaching background

My coaching began whilst at LJMU studying Sport Development and Business where I completed my Level 1 in Table Tennis and Football when. As part of my studies we looked in depth at a range of coaching styles linked particularly to professional sport. A lot of my time coaching was with different groups of Primary school children trying sports for the first time in school with the aim of establishing their interest in different sport.

It was through completing my FA Level 1 that I discovered my main interest in coaching was in football. I decided to pursue this through my summer holidays by travelling to USA through Challenger Sports to deliver football camps across the country. At the time football was still developing in the country, so a lot of the coaching was based around fun and games. My main purpose in these coaching sessions was to try develop a passion for football within these kids, making them enthusiastic about the sport whilst developing their basic footballing skills. When home from University I began volunteering at Wynyard Village FC helping to develop their Soccer Skills session for children aged 3-14. Due to my previous experience I spent a lot of these sessions working with the youngest group aged 3-10. The purpose of these sessions was to allow children to come and go to the session which involved some skills and drill followed by matches. The clubs philosophy for these sessions was “players between the ages of 3 and 10 are welcome to develop their footballing capability and have fun”. I was motivated by seeing the children improving their basic skills of passing, dribbling and shooting through the enjoyment of the games we played. The children who excelled would then move on from the Soccer Skills sessions into teams training sessions.



After my studies I then completed my Primary PGCE and spent 3 years as a Primary School teacher, teaching in a range of school and year groups. In every school that I taught in I created and ran football afterschool clubs for both KS1 and KS2 children. Alongside this I ran school teams when they entered tournaments and competition. These clubs were where I first came up with the issue of having children with completely different attitudes towards attending in the same group. Some children were highly experienced and competitive taking the club very seriously whilst others just enjoyed watching and playing football for fun, not necessarily competitively. This meant that my sessions had to be differentiated to meet all children’s needs and interests. Due to the politics of it being a school team, this gave me my first experience of dealing with external factors other than children when running a team, with influences from teachers, parents and other students coming into account.



Current situation

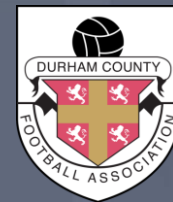
I always thought of myself as an experienced coach. It was only when I took the job at MFC Foundation and I started working alongside other coaches who worked with teams' I realised that my experienced was very much one sided towards inexperienced and non-competitive players. When I began shadowing coaches in sessions I realised that I wasn't experienced enough in developing children further on in their football career or how to develop them tactically in preparation for matches. After discussion with my manager I began shadowing more experienced coaches and began my FA Level 2.

Day 1

I remember arriving at the session full of nerves knowing that I was out of my depth and my main intention of the day was not to make myself look daft and to avoid having to leading any coaching sessions. A colleague of mine was also on the course so I made every effort for all group work to be paired with him. As the day progressed I began talking to more people, after talking with the 2 course leaders I began to feel more confident and comfortable within the group. We went outside for our practical sessions and I was impressed with the standard of coaches who had volunteered. Although this made me feel a little further out of my depth I made it a personal objective to try learn from these as best I could.

I particularly enjoyed the theory side of Day 1 where we discussed coaching and playing philosophies. These were two areas of coaching I had never considered; through my teaching I had developed a teaching philosophy and just presumed that these would be the same. Through being such an avid football fan and having a preferred style I like to watch I presumed my playing philosophy would be the same as this. It was only through discussion with others that I realised that they weren't the same thing and both philosophies were something I needed to consider before moving on in my coaching.

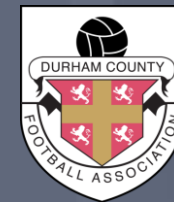
At the time I wasn't aware but since my Level 2 I have understood that the reason I enjoyed my time coaching in Primary schools, in USA and at Wynyard Village Soccer skills sessions was because the purpose of these sessions matched my personal Philosophy of develop skills and a love of the game through fun and games. I am now looking to develop my coaching ability whilst maintaining my coaching philosophy as my foundation of this.



Day 2

Me and my colleague travelled to day 2 together but both agreed that we spent too much time of Day 1 together and this hindered our progress because we weren't mixing as well as we could have. We both knew that this would be a step out of our comfort zone but would ensure we got the most out of the course. Due to a lot of my experience being in low income area of Teesside, the topic of Social influence was of particular interest to me. As a class teacher I was always aware of the impact I had on children but never fully appreciated my role as a coach to children from different backgrounds. I particularly benefitted from the days focus on Constraint based coaching. Before this I had never considered the pro's and cons of using all 3 R's within each session. It only came to life for me during the practical where the tutors led session involving these methods. Having the opportunity to see it come to life really allowed me to understand how beneficial it could be.





“ Since Block 1 I have begun to look at all my coaching differently. Not just using different methods and styles to hit my objectives but also think more about each individual in my session. ”

Day 3 & 4

After developing relationships and my confidence by mixing with different people we did the same on day 3. I was aware now that most people in the group had now led a session and there was probably going to be a point over the next two days I was going to have to lead a session. I found that in the theory sessions because of my experiences coaching and teaching I had become pretty confident getting involved in small group and whole group discussions however I was still not confident enough to volunteer to lead a practical session. During the mornings theory session we discussed the topic of self-esteem and the impact of football on individuals. As this was another area that I was passionate about I enjoyed the topic and was amazed to see the impact that football can have on a child's self-esteem in areas other than football. Particularly with school children I found this very relatable for a lot of the children I have been into contact with. I found myself beginning to understand some of the reasons why a lot of the children I had coached in the past acted the way they did and how the way I react could impact this. Although I didn't volunteer for it, I was giving the responsibility to lead a group coaching. I found that it wasn't as bad as I expected and was glad that I did it. Although I regret the anxiety and overthinking that I had towards leading a group I am glad I waited because it definitely helped my nerves that I knew the other coaches more before leading.

After Block 1 and my Project

When I began my Level 2 my intention was to use the Y7 girls football team at Trinity, however due to school commitments their training and matches weren't regular enough. I then contacted Wynyard Village FC to use one of their teams for my project. I choose to work with the under 10s because a lot of their team started from the Soccer Skills sessions that I ran 6 years earlier. Their manager got involved with the club because he brought his son to my sessions. This means that I already knew a lot of the kids and parents, I like to believe that the positive introduction I gave them to football when they first began their footballing journey has helped them to get to where they are not.. The other advantage of this is their manager has recently completed his Level 2 and it allowed me to learn from him too. I have spent time with the club shadowing coaches and getting to know the players and then leading sessions and being involved in match days myself.

Since Block 1 I have begun to look at all my coaching differently. Not just using different methods and styles to hit my objectives but also think more about each individual in my session. Not only within in the team that I am coaching but also in the sessions I run for the MFC Foundation. Particularly when I run my Premier League Kicks session, which is free for all children aged 7-17 in a low income area of Middlesbrough, my Block 1 experience has made me look at these participants very differently. I am now looking at them and thinking about the 4 corner model when planning and running sessions rather than just thinking about the physical aspect.

